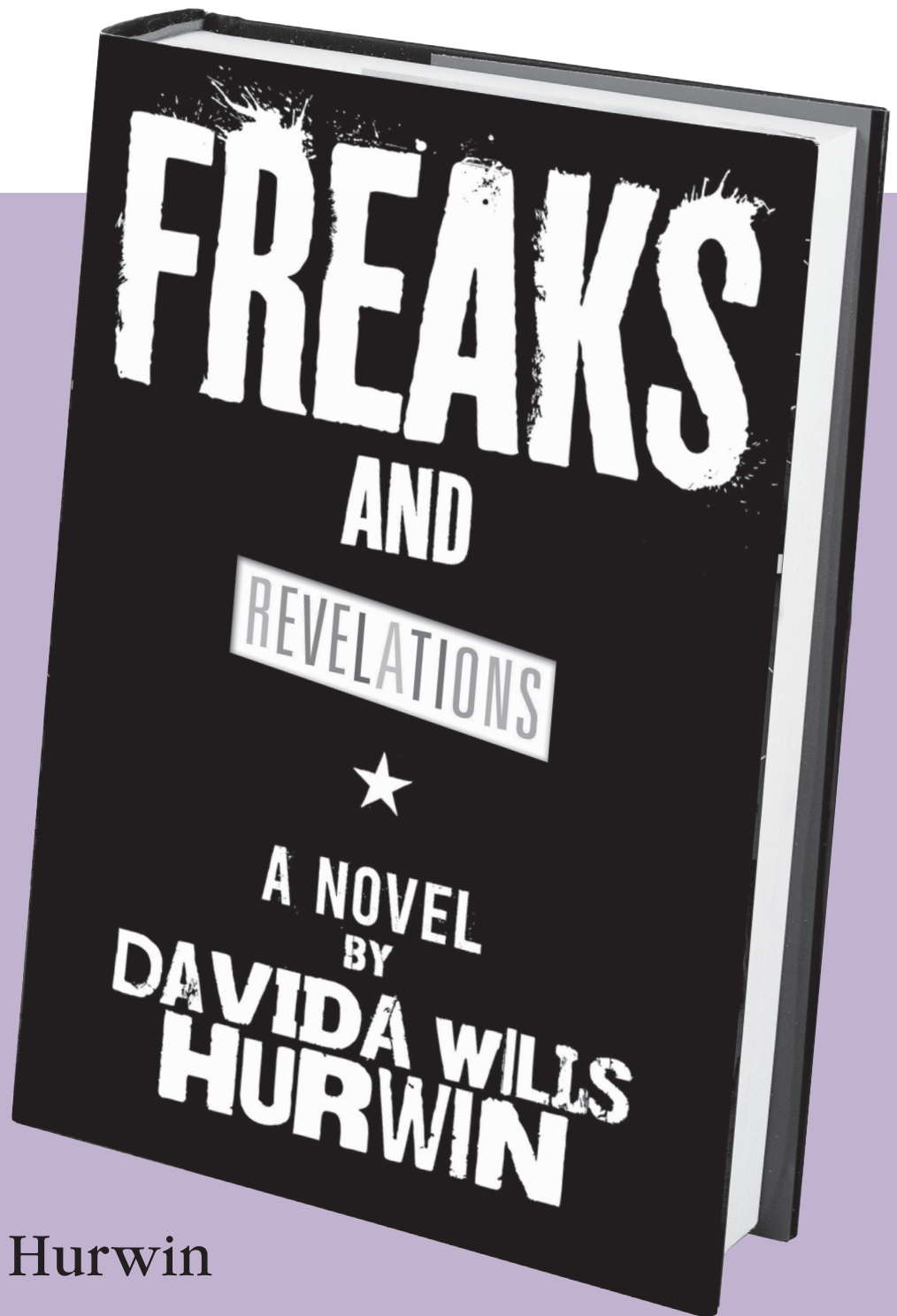


FREAKS AND REVELATIONS

Thematic & Curriculum connections

- ❖ Hate Crimes
- ❖ Discrimination
- ❖ Forgiveness
- ❖ Overcoming Obstacles

Ages 15 & up



By
Davida Wills Hurwin

This story is inspired by the real lives of Matthew Boger and Timothy Zaal, who have shared their story on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and NPR.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways is Doug’s life similar to Jason’s? How are they different? What are some of the unique challenges faced by each of them? Do you think one has a significantly easier life? Explain your answer.
2. Using the phrase, “This is a story about…” supply five words to describe *Freaks and Revelations*. Explain your choices.
3. In *Freaks and Revelations*, fear both motivates and incapacitates Doug and Jason. Consider how they deal with their fears. Do they acknowledge them? Are they able to turn to others for help? What are the consequences of their reactions? Who are the people you seek out to assist you when you are afraid?
4. *Freaks and Revelations* is told in first person in alternating chapters; how would the story be different if someone besides Jason and Doug were telling it?
5. Consider Doug and Jason’s encounter at Oki Dog’s; how does this accidental meeting serve as a catalyst for change in each of their lives?
6. Considering Doug and Jason’s perspectives, in what ways is *Freaks and Revelations* a story about things that have been lost? What does each of them find along the way?

CROSS CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

As a pre-reading activity, have students complete an anticipation guide structured in the following manner:

BEFORE READING	AFTER READING	STATEMENTS
		Racism and prejudice are only issues for racial and ethnic minorities.
		There are consequences for every action an individual takes.
		Peer pressure is always negative.
		People who come from dysfunctional homes end up making poor life choices.
		Hate crimes are never forgivable.

Instruct students to complete the guide by placing a “+” sign in the box next to the statements for which they agree, and a “0” next to those for which they disagree. They must commit to agreement or disagreement—there are no conditional responses. Students should be assured that there are no correct or incorrect positions.

Once students have had the opportunity to complete the guide, the teacher reads each statement aloud and has students who agree show it by standing or raising their hands. Each student should be permitted to provide their rationale for agreeing if they wish.

LANGUAGE ARTS CONNECTIONS

- Dynamics of Discrimination—Have students compose an essay where they analyze the human dynamics of bias, exclusion and oppression and examine the consequences of social and political injustice using examples from the text.
- Considering Character—Create an “I AM” Poem or a Biopoem

Purpose/Directions: The purpose of this strategy is to help students demonstrate knowledge of a character by following written prompts to complete a poem about the individual. Students can be given the prompts to follow on a worksheet or alternatively, students may create an original slideshow using PowerPoint or Movie Maker.

“I AM” POEM

FIRST STANZA:

I am (name the character)
 I wonder (something the character is actually curious about)
 I hear (an imaginary sound the character might hear)
 I see (an imaginary sight the character meet see)
 I want (something the character truly desires)

SECOND STANZA:

I pretend (something the character actually pretends to do)
 I feel (a feeling about something imaginary)
 I touch (an imaginary touch)
 I worry (something that really bothers the character)
 I cry (something that makes the character very sad)
 I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

THIRD STANZA:

I understand (something the character knows is true)
 I say (something that the character believes in)
 I dream (something the character might actually dream about)
 I try (something the character really makes an effort about)
 I hope (something the character actually hopes for)
 I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

BIOPOEM

Line 1: First name
 Line 2: Three traits that describe the character
 Line 3: Relative of _____
 Line 4: Lover of _____ (three things)
 Line 5: Who feels _____ (three things)
 Line 6: Who needs _____ (three things)
 Line 7: Who fears _____ (three things)
 Line 8: Who gives _____ (three things)
 Line 9: Who would like to see _____ (three things)
 Line 10: Resident of _____
 Line 11: Last name

Essential Quotes Analysis

The language that an author uses in his work is essential to getting across the intended meaning. Select four quotes from *Freaks and Revelations* that seem to signify key ideas that the author hopes readers will really absorb.

These might be quotes spoken by characters or might be from the narration, and page numbers should be included with the quotes. Have students develop a chart with the following four columns:

- Quote
- Page Number
- Relevance to the Novel
- Intended Meaning for Readers

The intended meaning should have relevance not only to the characters in the text, but to the lives of anyone who reads the book.

SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTIONS

1. Investigate local advocacy groups affiliated with social identities that might be considered targets for discrimination (GLBT, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, etc.). Discuss how these groups work to combat discrimination or violence, the challenges they attempt to overcome for those they represent, and how they are publicly perceived.
2. Select a local, regional, national, or international advocacy group. Research the group's origins, mission, and role in landmark accomplishments for those whom they advocate for. Analyze the transformation of the organization over time. Has its mission or intended purpose changed (Narrowed? Expanded)?
3. Research institutional, local, regional, or state statutes that legislate the activities of social groups. Compare the manner in which such groups may be restricted, protected, or managed in terms of their assembly, public relations, and activities. For example, are groups on local or state educational campuses limited in their location or manner of public speaking or expression? What process must particular groups in schools or the community to follow to recruit, advertise, assemble, etc.? Are there any such groups whose activities are favored over others? Limited over others? Outlawed entirely?
4. Investigate Supreme Court cases regarding discrimination. Students should report on the issues being challenged, the legal grounds for hearing the case, and the arguments for and against the decision rendered by the Justices. Examples might include (but certainly aren't limited to): *Dred Scott v. Sanford*; *Plessy v. Ferguson*; *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*; *Korematsu v. U.S.*; *Loving v. Virginia*; *Lau v. Nichols*; *Lawrence v. Texas*; *Johnson v. Transportation Agency*; *Sutton v. United Airlines*; *Romer v. Evans*; *Bragdon v. Abbott*.

THE ARTS

1. In *Freaks and Revelations*, punk rock music becomes both a form of escapism, connection, and inspiration for Doug. Research the American Punk rock music movement of the 1970s. Consider and answer the following:
 - Where did punk rock music originate?
 - Who were the most influential punk rock music groups?
 - What social or cultural events were transpiring that encouraged the development of punk rock music?
 - Why was punk rock music appealing to young people?
2. Music is used throughout the novel as a way to connect Doug to others and the world at large. Create a CD with an original playlist which is representative of the experiences that his character or Jason undergoes throughout the novel. Create original art for the jewel case and on the interior and, after including appropriate artist information, offer an explanation for the selection of each song.
3. Using a variety of mediums, have students create an original piece of art which is symbolic of one of the major themes of *Freaks and Revelations* (these may include but are not limited to the following: hate, identity, generalization, discrimination, bias, stereotypes, inequality, sexual orientation, family, religion).

FREAKS AND REVELATIONS POST-READING ACTIVITY

Purpose: Help students make connections between characters or events in *Freaks and Revelations* with people and events in their lives. After reading *Freaks and Revelations*, ask students to complete the chart considering the ways in which the story relates to their life and the world at large.

As I read <i>Freaks and Revelations</i> , I observed...	As I read <i>Freaks and Revelations</i> , I wondered...
Sensory Descriptions Included in <i>Freaks and Revelations</i> (smell, hear, touch, sight, taste)	Some of the things I realized while reading <i>Freaks and Revelations</i> were...

AUTHOR Q AND A:

Q: What inspired you to write *Freaks and Revelations* in first person? Did you ever consider telling the story from a different perspective?

A: I actually tried a draft of *Freaks* in third person and didn't like the separation. First person allows me the immediacy one has when working with a character on stage—and since I discover my story as I write, it allows me the intimacy I need to figure out where each character will go. This was especially true with *F&R*, since plotline was dictated by actual events.

Q: What was the greatest challenge of writing a fictional work inspired by true events?

A: Matthew and Tim were both severely compromised as youth, necessitating a withdrawal from their actual moment to moment experiences of life. Thus, retelling what actually happened to them as they were growing up was not often linear. My challenge became to take the events that most significantly represented their “growth” curve, and then flesh these out as best I could.

Q: The search for identity is a recurring theme throughout *Freaks and Revelations*. What inspired you to focus on this throughout the novel?

A: I don't consciously focus on themes as I write. I look to become acquainted with my characters and then, to free them to explore and experience what their circumstances manifest.

Q: What's the best part of writing for teens?

A: Though circumstance and contemporary culture definitely influence what a teen chooses to read, the commonality of *being human* seems to override this. I like the bonds that are forged when we seek to understand the “us” of anything that is done in art.

Q: What influences your writing?

A: I teach theater and especially love Musical Theater. Stephen Sondheim is a huge influence, as are storytellers Orson Scott Card and Stephen King.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

THE MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE

<http://www.museumoftolerance.com>

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY HATE CRIMES RESEARCH NETWORK

<http://www.hatecrime.net/>

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM—RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

<http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/>

GENOCIDE WATCH

<http://www.genocidewatch.org/>

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

<http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cid/civilrights/hate.htm>

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST &

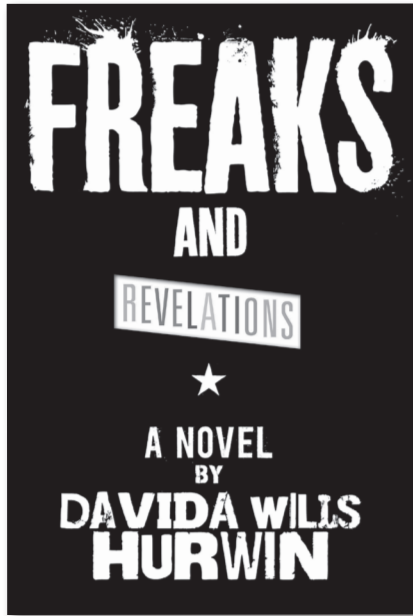
GENOCIDE STUDIES EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

<http://www.chgs.umn.edu/educational/>

SIMON WIESENTHAL CENTER LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

<http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=lsKWLbPJLnF&b=4441267>

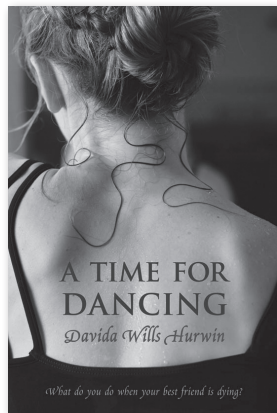
about the book



This raw, moving novel follows two teenagers—one, a Mohawk-wearing 17-year-old violent misfit; the other, a gay 13-year-old cast out by his family, hustling on the streets and trying to survive. Acclaimed author Davida Wills Hurwin creates a riveting narrative told in alternating perspectives of their lives before and after the violent hate crime that changed both their futures. This tragic but ultimately inspirational journey of two polarized teens, their violent first meeting, and their peaceful reunion years later is an unforgettable story of survival and forgiveness.

Freaks and Revelations
By Davida Wills Hurwin
978-0-316-04996-2

also by Davida Wills Hurwin



Sam and Jules—everyone knows that when you see one, the other can't be far behind. Best friends for more than half their lives, the two are practically inseparable. And in the summer before their last year of high school, Sam and Jules are certain that whatever the future brings—college or professional dance careers or both—they'll be ready for it, sharing the triumphs and facing the tears together.

But nothing could have prepared them for Jules's sudden illness and the discovery of its cause—cancer. Sam tries to be a true friend, supporting Jules during the weeks of testing and doctors and treatments, but the horrifying pain and indignities that Jules suffers, and the feeling that she has lost control over her own

life, force Jules to a place where even Sam cannot follow. Now both Jules and Sam must learn to accept the unacceptable—that Jules's cancer may not go away. How each, in her own way, comes to face the possibility of Jules's death, and learns to celebrate her life, makes for a searingly honest, unforgettable novel.

about the author



Davida Wills Hurwin is the author of *A Time for Dancing* (an ALA Best Book for Young Adults) and *The Farther You Run*. She teaches theater at Crossroads School for Arts and Sciences and still loves to dance. She lives in Southern California with her husband and daughter.



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